

## AN ACT

For Incorporating the American Philosophical Society, held at Philadelphia,  
for promoting Useful Knowledge.

WHEREAS, The cultivation of useful knowledge and the advancement of the liberal arts and sciences in any country have the most direct tendency towards the improvement of agriculture, the enlargement of trade, the ease and comfort of life, the ornament of society, and the increase and happiness of mankind. And, whereas, this country of North America, which the goodness of Providence hath given us to inherit, from the vastness of its extent, the variety of its climate, the fertility of its soil, the yet unexplored treasures of its bowels, the multitude of its rivers, lakes, bays, inlets, and other conveniences of navigation, offers to these United States one of the richest subjects of cultivation ever presented to any people upon earth. And, whereas, the experience of ages shows that improvements of a public nature are best carried on by societies of liberal and ingenious men, uniting their labors, without regard to nation, sect, or party, in one grand pursuit, alike interesting to all, whereby mutual prejudices are worn off, a humane and philosophical spirit is cherished, and youth stimulated to a laudable diligence and emulation in the pursuit of wisdom. And, whereâs, upon these principles, divers public-spirited gentlemen in Pennsylvania, and other American States, did heretofore unite themselves, under certain regulations, into one voluntary Society, by the name of "The American Philosophical Society, held at Philadelphia, for promoting Useful Knowledge," and by their successful labors and investigations, to the great credit of America, have extended their reputation so far that men of the first eminence in the republic of letters in the most civilized nations in Europe have done honor to their publications, and desired to be enrolled among their members. And, whereas, the Society, after

having been long interrupted in their laudable pursuits by the calamities of war, and the distresses of our country, have found means to revive their design, in hopes of being able to prosecute the same with their former success, and being further encouraged therein by the public, for which purpose they have prayed us, the representatives of the freemen of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, that they may be created one body politic and corporate forever, with such powers, privileges, and immunities as may be necessary for answering the valuable purposes which the said Society had originally in view :

Wherefore, in order to encourage the said Society in the prosecution and advancement of all useful branches of knowledge, for the benefit of their country, and of mankind ; be it enacted, and it is hereby enacted, by the representatives of the freemen of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in general assembly met, and by the authority of the same, That the members of the said American Philosophical Society heretofore voluntarily associated for promoting useful knowledge, and such other persons as have been duly elected members and officers of the same, agreeably to the Fundamental Laws and Regulations of the said Society, comprised in twelve sections, prefixed to their volume of Transactions, published in Philadelphia by William and Thomas Bradford, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and seventy-one ; and who shall in all respects conform themselves to the said laws and regulations, and such other laws, regulations, and ordinances as shall hereafter be duly made and enacted by the said Society, according to the tenor hereof, be, and forever hereafter shall be, one body corporate and politic in deed, by the name and style of The American Philosophical Society, held at Philadelphia, for promoting Useful Knowledge, and by the same name they are hereby constituted and confirmed one body corporate and politic, to have perpetual succession, and by the same name they and their successors are hereby declared and made able and capable in law, to have, hold, receive, and enjoy lands, tenements, rents, franchises, heredita-

ments, gifts, and bequests of what nature so ever, in fee simple, or for term of life, lives, years, or otherwise, and also to give, grant, let, sell, alien, or assign the same lands, tenements, hereditaments, goods, chattels, and premises, according to the nature of the respective gifts, grants, and bequests made to them the said Society and of their estate therein.

*Provided*, That the amount of the clear yearly value of such real estate do not exceed the value of ten thousand bushels of good merchantable wheat.

And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That the said Society be, and shall be for ever hereafter able, and capable in law to sue and be sued, plead and be impleaded, answer and be answered unto, defend and be defended, in all or any of the courts or other places, and before any judges, justices, and other person and persons, in all manner of actions, suits, complaints, pleas, causes, and matters, of what nature or kind so ever, within this Commonwealth; and that it shall and may be lawful to and for the said Society, for ever hereafter, to have and use one common seal in their affairs, and the same at their will and pleasure to break, change, alter, and renew.

And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That for the well governing the said Society, and ordering their affairs, they shall have the following officers, that is to say, one Patron, who shall be his Excellency the President of the Supreme Executive Council [now the Governor] of this Commonwealth, for the time being, and likewise one President, three Vice-Presidents, four Secretaries, three Curators, one Treasurer, together with a council of twelve members; and that on the first Friday of January next, between the hours of two and five in the afternoon, as many of the members of the said Society as shall have paid up their arrears due to the said Society, and shall declare their willingness to conform to the laws, regulations, and ordinances of the Society, then duly in force, according to the tenor hereof, by subscribing the same, and who shall attend in the Hall, or place of meeting of

the said Society, within the time aforesaid, shall choose by ballot, agreeably to the Fundamental Laws and Regulations hereinbefore referred to, one President, four Secretaries, three Curators, and one Treasurer, and at the same time and place, the members met and qualified as aforesaid, shall in like manner choose four members for the council, to hold their offices for one year, four more members for the council to hold their offices for two years, and four more members for the council to hold their offices for three years. And on the first Friday in January, which shall be in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty-two, and so likewise on the first Friday of January, yearly and every year thereafter, between the hours of two and five in the afternoon, the members of the said Society met and qualified as aforesaid shall choose one President, three Vice-Presidents, four Secretaries, three Curators, and one Treasurer, to hold their respective offices for one year, and four Councilmen, to hold their offices for three years. *Provided*, That no person residing within the United States shall be capable of being President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, or member of the council, or of electing to any of the said offices, who is not capable of electing and being elected to civil offices within the State in which he resides. *Provided also*, That nothing herein contained shall be considered as intended to exclude any of the said officers or councilors, whose times shall be expired, from being reelected according to the pleasure of the said Society; and of the day, hours, and place of all such elections, due notice shall be given by the Secretaries, or some of them, in one or more of the public newspapers of this State, agreeably to the said Fundamental Laws and Regulations before referred to.

And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That the officers and council of the said Society shall be capable of exercising such power for the well governing and ordering the affairs of the Society, and of holding such occasional meetings for that purpose, as shall be described, fixed, and determined, by the statutes, laws, regulations, and ordinances of the said

Society, hereafter to be made. *Provided always*, That no statute, law, regulation, or ordinance shall ever be made or passed by the said Society, or be binding upon the members thereof, or any of them, unless the same hath been duly proposed, and fairly drawn up in writing at one stated meeting of the Society, and enacted or passed at a subsequent meeting, at least the space of fourteen days after the former meeting, and upon due notice in some of the public newspapers that the enacting of statutes and laws, or the making and passing ordinances and regulations, will be part of the business of such meeting; nor shall any statute, law, regulation, or ordinance be then or at any time enacted or passed, unless thirteen members of the said Society, or such greater number of members as may be afterwards fixed by the rules of this Society, be present, besides such quorum of the officers and council as the laws of the Society for the time being may require, and unless the same be voted by two-thirds of the whole body then present; all which statutes, laws, ordinances and regulations, so as aforesaid duly made, enacted, and passed, shall be binding upon every member of the said Society, and be from time to time inviolably observed, according to the tenor and effect thereof; provided they be not repugnant or contrary to the laws of this Commonwealth, for the time being in force and effect.

And whereas, nations truly civilized (however unhappily at variance on other accounts) will never wage war with the arts and sciences and the common interests of humanity;

Be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That it shall and may be lawful for the said Society by their proper officers, at all times, whether in peace or in war, to correspond with learned Societies, as well as individual learned men, of any nation or country, upon matters merely belonging to the business of the said Society; such as the mutual communication of their discoveries and proceedings in philosophy and science; the procuring books, apparatus, natural curiosities, and such other articles and intelligence as are usually exchanged between learned bodies for furthering their common

pursuits. *Provided always,* That such correspondence of the said Society be at all times open to the inspection of the Supreme Executive Council of this Commonwealth.

(Signed)

JOHN BAYARD,

*Speaker.*

Enacted into a Law at Philadelphia, on Wednesday, the fifteenth day of March, Anno Domini one thousand seven hundred and eighty.

(Signed)

THOMAS PAINE,

*Clerk of the General Assembly.*

(COPY.)